

*Arts beyond the Patterns: Integrating Illustration and the Cultural and Creative Industries in Digital Evolution for the Masking Tape Design*

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**Abstract**

A second major milestone occurred in 1925 when Richard G. Drew, a young lab assistant, invented masking tape for 3M Company. In the following years, technical progress and graphic design influenced, the masking tape for stationery was born in 2008. Masking Tape comes in a variety of colors and patterns that allow people to decorate and personalize their projects. As the market leader in many sectors, masking tapes design was fast growing for the stationery market in the world. For that reason, pattern design becomes an important characteristic on the masking tapes design. In this study, we create and publish online surveys, and also view 275 results graphically to make our own masking tape design project. In value terms, the masking tape is increased the market and the cultural and creative industries.

Keywords: masking tape, pattern design, stationery

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## **Introduction**

Nowadays, due to the rapid growth of technology the quality of life is increased, which influences people's sense of aesthetic. In other words, people have higher standard of attractiveness. Hence they pay more attention on the quality of life and the attractive appearance of products, that is the design. Furthermore, with substantial support from the Taiwanese government, the industries pertain to creative and cultural products are blooming. The influences of The Cultural and Creative industries reflect on various perspectives of Taiwanese citizens, regardless of concrete products or invisible services; it brings a whole new level of experience in daily life. We are interested in the field of The Cultural and Creative Industries. Therefore, we create some illustrations from scratch and use them as icons to make one of the most popular stationery, masking tapes.

Masking tapes have approximately a centenary history. The first masking tape was made by 3M Company in 1925 (3M, 2014), and it was simply for industrial use. Until 2008, Kamoi Kakoshi Company in Japan produced masking tapes with different colors and patterns, as well as some new packages, according to three female customers' suggestions (Zhen, 2013). The series of product was named "MT", and was begun to sell in stationery shops and groceries stores. With a great deal of positive feedback from customers, masking tapes are no longer merely for industries use, they are considered as a piece of stationery. Now there is a variety of masking tapes available in every stationery shop; also customers can customize their own masking tapes based on their personal preferences. Moreover, there are some companies used them as free gift as a marketing strategy. Several books, products and activities related to masking tapes can be found in the market, which is evidence of the increasing popularity of masking tapes.

Masking tapes differ from other kinds of tape in their materials. Masking tapes are made from paper, which means that you can write on them. In addition, they are not as stick as other kinds of tapes, accordingly, it will less likely to damage the surface of the objects when removing masking tapes from them. Owing to this characteristic of masking tapes, they are reusable. The materials of masking tapes and their specifications can be discussed as follows:

### **1. Materials**

Masking tapes are made from Washi or Wagami, which is their major characteristic (Jeancard, 2013). Thus, masking tapes are also known as "Washi tapes." Generally speaking, paper that is made in Japan is named Washi; it is a method to distinguish paper from westerns. Washi is usually made from the fibers of different plant fibers, and it is widely use in Japan, such as paintings, carvings, windows, furniture and so on. Compared with western papers, the fibers of Washi are longer, and they are thinner and rougher. Because of this, the durability of Washi is better and it has a soft touch. The characteristics of Washi make it suitable for making masking tapes. However, due to the low production of Washi, its price tends to be higher.

## 2. Width

The width of masking tapes basically can be categorized into seven sizes: 3mm, 6mm, 8mm, 10mm, 15mm, 25mm, and 30mm. Nonetheless, not all masking tapes can be classified into these sizes, namely wallpaper masking tape-mt CASA (Jeancard, 2013), the co-branded masking tapes of Damoculture and Taiwanese illustrators (18mm), the customized masking tapes by mt company (24mm), three types of 70mm masking tapes by mt company and some masking tapes in the markets.

## 3. Length

Initially, masking tapes only have 10 and 15 meters in length. Nevertheless, other length sizes (e.g. 3,5,7 and 8 meters) are available. Some special masking tapes might be shorter and the price might be higher, due to their design.

## 4. Die-cutting

Normal clicking machine merely applicable on straight cutting; for special shapes, other knife modes are required, which is die-cutting (Tian, 2010). Die-cutting is one of the necessary procedures in manufacturing masking tapes. After the process of die cutting, it makes the masking tapes to be cut into pieces effortlessly. The patterns of die cutting are usually characters, animals, objects, decorative borders, and lace borders.

## 5. Hot foil stamping

Hot foil stamping is a printing style, which is the application of pigment, gold or silver on paper (Hot foil stamping, n.d.). It is also utilized as one of printing process in manufacturing masking tapes, particularly for festivals' and special days' products (e.g. Christmas). Hot foil stamping not only enhances the quality of masking tapes, but also provides the feeling of luxury, which is more likely promote customers' desire of purchasing.

## 6. Continuous patterns

Repetition is one of the ten principles of art (Lin, n.d.). Repetition is the same shapes and colors repeat continuously; often more than two images would be composed as a unit for repetition. The design of repetition could be divided into two kinds: two sides of continuous and four sides of continuous. Two side of continuous repetition is employed in producing our masking tape, which repeats the pattern from the top to bottom and from left to right. There are three types to apply two sides of continuous repetition: scattered, vertical and corrugated.

Recently, a series of masking tapes "I understand what you said" was introduced by the National Place Museum on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 2013 on Facebook. This is the most successful and famous case of masking tapes in Taiwan and it brought enormous amount of profits for the National Place Museum. The masking tapes were designed by adopting one of the Qing Dynasty emperor's, Kangxi, handwriting. The phrases that were printed on the masking tapes were used to be use when the emperor replied to official ministers' reports. Furthermore, on October 2013, the series of masking

tapes won the fifth place of the best creative products in Culture and Creative Industries Awards. The success of these products could be mainly attributed to the application of emperor's handwriting and ancient expressions; they show the attitude of the masking tapes, which makes them interesting.

In order to create our masking tape, we conducted an online questionnaire on BBS and PPT stationery forums with 200 respondents who are interested in masking tapes. Most of the respondents are female range from 18 to 30 years old, with 80 percent, and over half of them are students (51%). Among the 200 respondents, only three of them have never bought masking tapes; others have purchased masking tapes before. In the group of respondents who have bought masking tapes before, approximately 56 percent of them purchase masking tapes once or twice a month; about 31 percent of them seldom purchase masking tapes.

Another section of the questionnaire inquired respondents' perceptions about the masking tapes design. People who preferred repetitive patterns account for about 30 percent, the quality of products with 23 percent, price with 23 percent, promoting with 13 percent, sizes with 11 percent and others with less than 1 percent. The results indicate that most people take the pattern of masking tapes as the prior consideration while purchasing masking tapes.

The other section of the questionnaire investigated the patterns customers prefer. Plants were ranked as the second place; therefore, plants are chosen as the theme of our masking tape creation. Each of the character was created based on one kind of plant. To make the characters more active and human-like, they are personification through combining assigned human personality with them.

There are three purposes of this project:

1. Conveying the ideology of environmental protection by using the personification characters of selected plants.
2. Demonstrating the manufacturing process of masking tapes and their publication approaches.
3. Integrating the illustrations created from transparent colors into masking tapes, and further their applications.

Two criteria were used in choosing plants for the design of characters, which are familiar to public and helpful to the environmental protection. In such a case, six plants were selected: (1) tree, (2) Poinsettia, (3) Feterita, (4) Aloe, (5) Coughgrass and (6) Cactus.

There are three considerations in designing the masking tape:

1. In order to create the atmosphere of gentleness, transparent colors and color pencils were utilized with the technique of rendering. The primary color of each character was according to the original color of the plants.
2. The length limitation of each composed pattern unit for repetitive printing.
3. Aiming to express the importance of environmental protection, in selecting the plants for characters design, plants that are common but people are unfamiliar with priority. Apart from this, rare plants were excluded.

What is an illustration? “An illustration is visualization or a subjects made by an artist.” (Illustration, n.d.), which is omnipresent in daily life, such as posters, commercials, packages, and commodities. The wide employment of illustrations is owing to the fact that it facilitates customers to comprehend products’ descriptions and creates approachable feeling to customers. There are several methods to present illustrations; all kinds of painting tools are suitable for creating illustrations. Lately, using ballpoint pen in creating illustrations unfolds a new trend, which decreases the threshold of illustrations innovation.

To create appealing and adorable illustrations for our masking tape, transparent colors and color pencils were exploited as the major tools with the painting technique of rendering. First, using the transparent colors as the foundation of illustrations, and then using color pencils to emphasize the characteristics of each illustration. As mentioned above, each character was designed based on the chosen plants. Instead of demonstrating them as realist paintings, we incorporated human personality to make the characters to show the childlike innocence of them.

After making the characters which represent the six chosen plants were made, each illustration was scanned. With some adjustments in the illustrations’ arrangements and margins, the composed illustration was ready to be printed on the width of 15 mm masking tapes by using two sides of continuous repetition.

This project helps us to gain more knowledge on verity of plants and their functions to the environment, as well as on the inside story about the masking tapes in terms of the printing process, materials and sizes. It is pleased to explore the topic that we are interested in as our project and use the illustrations that we created to produce a masking tape on offer. We hope that via our masking tape, we might be able to bring positive impacts to its potential consumers, meanwhile, to support other artists who may be interested in creative work related to masking tapes designing.

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